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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-2002**

December 14, 2009

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The Honorable Robert M. Gates  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20310

Dear Mr. Secretary:

It has come to my attention that three U.S. Navy SEALs have been charged with prisoner abuse in connection with the capture of a terrorist suspect. I have also been made aware that Special Operations Petty Officers 2nd Class Matthew McCabe, Jonathon Keefe, and Petty Officer 1st Class Julio Huertas, have refused nonjudicial punishment from their commanding officer. They are scheduled to be tried by a court-martial in January.

As a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and a former prosecutor, I have full confidence in the military judicial process. I urge you to evaluate the process that lead to this point and whether proper judgment was used based on the facts to charge these men.

We are at war with radical extremists, and our Navy SEALs are on the front line fighting terrorists and protecting our national security. Nothing about being a Navy SEAL is easy. They are trained to exercise complete discipline at all times. When there is an incident, such as a complaint from an alleged terrorist, we need to make sure we have all the facts before charges are filed. Under no circumstances should we give the benefit of a doubt to a man suspected of murdering four U.S. contractors over our men and women in uniform. If it is found that a mistake was made, those responsible should be held accountable.

We need to make sure that our SEALs, and all of our brave men and women in uniform, have the support they need to protect our country. I am asking that you give this matter your personal attention and keep the Congress fully informed as the process moves forward.

Sincerely,



C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress